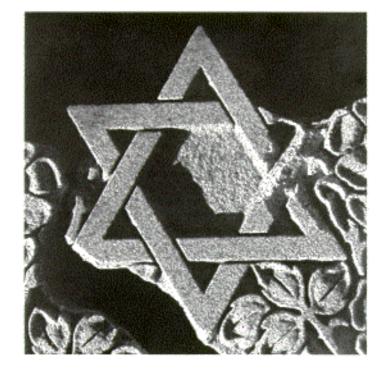


# STONES OF REMEMBRANCE THE HISTORIC JEWISH CEMETERY in LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO



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THE HISTORIC JEWISH CEMETERY
in
LAS VEGAS, NEW MEXICO

Photos by Cary Herz Foreword by Rabbi Leonard A. Helman Introduction by Stanley M. Hordes

NEW MEXICO JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY



### FOREWORD

Through the ages, Jewish history has been preserved not only on the written page, but also on the carved stones of Jewish cemeteries. Over the centuries, the first act that Jews performed after moving into a new area was to establish and dedicate a cemetery. To honor and care for the dead was considered the greatest of all Mitzvot—positive acts following God's commandments.

In 1881, pioneering Jews of Las Vegas, New Mexico, founded a small cemetery at the far outskirts of the town. Today, over a century later, the Montefiore Cemetery is incorporated into the town along with cemeteries of organizations such as the Masons. The names and histories of the men, women and children of Las Vegas Jewry are found on the stones in this graveyard. Unfortunately, vandalism has destroyed much of that great historic site. Jews today are attempting to preserve the cometery and to prevent further vandalism.

This booklet is about the Montefiore Cemetery, established by New Mexico's first Jewish congregation, and the efforts of past and present generations of Jews and non-Jews to maintain our precious connection with Jewish history.

Thank you for reading this work and seeing the pictures of a proud chapter in New Mexico Jewish history.

Rabbi Leonard A. Helman Congregation Beth Shalom Santa Fe, New Mexico



### INTRODUCTION

Scores of headstones stand in the Montefiore Cemetery in the largely Hispanic town of Las Vegas, New Mexico, bearing inscriptions in German and Hebrew, weathered by harsh winds and battered by senseless vandalism.

To most people, this scene appears most unlikely and far removed from the contexts usually associated with Jewish life in the United States. But, fortunately, these headstones reveal much about the multicultural history of New Mexico since the European colonization began in the late 1500s. These markers offer mute testimony to the long and complex history of Jewish pioneers in New Mexico.

In the mid-1800s, on the heels of the conquering United States Army, a wave of Jewish settlers arrived, mainly Ashkenazi merchants and traders from Germany and Eastern Europe. Initially, most of these Jews were attracted to Santa Fe, but when the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad bypassed the capital, many gravitated to the new commercial centers of Albuquerque and Las Vegas. Others chose to disperse among the small Hispanic villages and Indian Pueblos, making their livelihoods as traveling merchants, ranchers or farmers.

The first synagogue in New Mexico, Congregation Monteflore, was built in Las Vegas in 1881, and it was soon followed by the development of such volunteer groups and fraternal organizations and the Rosenwald Chapter of B'nai B'rith, Jewish Ladies Cemetery Fund and Hebrew Ladies Benevolent Society. Today, names such as Taichert, Ilfeld, Rosenwald, Terr, Regensberg, Teitelbaum, Rosenthal, Stern, Jaffa, Hoffman and Vorenberg fill the records and grave stones that document the early settlement of the thriving Las Vegas Jewish community of the early twentieth century.

By the 1920s, the principal east-west route of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad had bypassed Las Vegas, causing the town to suffer a pronounced commercial decline. Many of the Jews of Las Vegas chose to leave town in favor of greater economic opportunities elsewhere. Today, few Jews remain in Las Vegas to carry on the traditions of their ancestors. Along with the fading paint on the buildings where Jewish merchants conducted their commercial business, the cemetery serves as a stark memorial to those who preceded us and established the first formal Jewish community in New Mexico.

Stanley M. Hordes Vice-President New Mexico Jewish Historical Society March 30, 1989

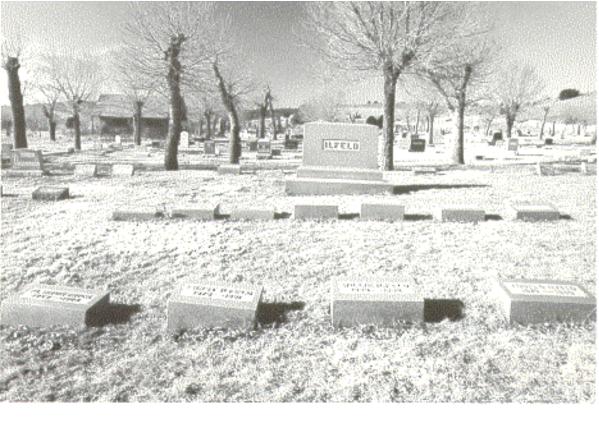


### THE PHOTOGRAPHER'S STATEMENT

When I first approached the Montefiore Cemetery, I did so as a photojournalist: I wanted to document its existence on film. However, as I made subsequent visits, the cometery took on a new importance for me. I began not only to record, but to explore and explain through the medium of photography. The textures and shapes of the grave markers, the forms and patterns of carefully etched stone, began to represent both an artistic and a historical continuum.

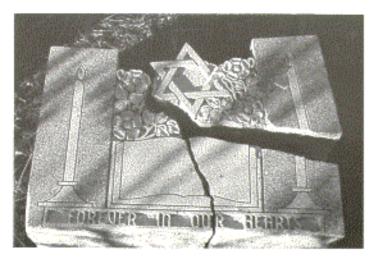
I am fascinated by the bravery of the first people who came here. They came with little or nothing and built their lives and their community. I get lost out there with them; there is no movement except the birds and the sun and the photographer. I sometimes have a sense of urgency, despite the stillness. This is caused in part by my response to the stories the cometery tells. I would like the cemetery to be around for another one hundred years so those seeking it out, like me, can bear witness to those stories.

### Cary Herz



Montefiore Cemetery was established in 1888, comprising the northwest corner of the Masonic Cemetery. Overlanking Las Vegas and the Gallinas River Valley, it serves as the final resting place for some 160 Jewish pioneers who settled in the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.





Despite the diligent efforts of the few remaining descendants, vandalism and neglect have taken their toll on the cemetery.



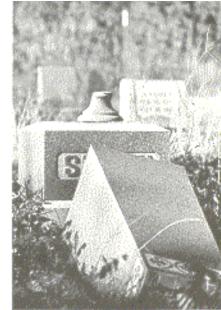






In 1986, the New Mexico Jewish Historical Society initiated an annual clean-up of the cemetery, attempting to restore the site to its former dignity. SCRII COLA AT HOOF GERMANY DIED AT LAS VEGAS JULY G 1805 AGED 54 YEARS



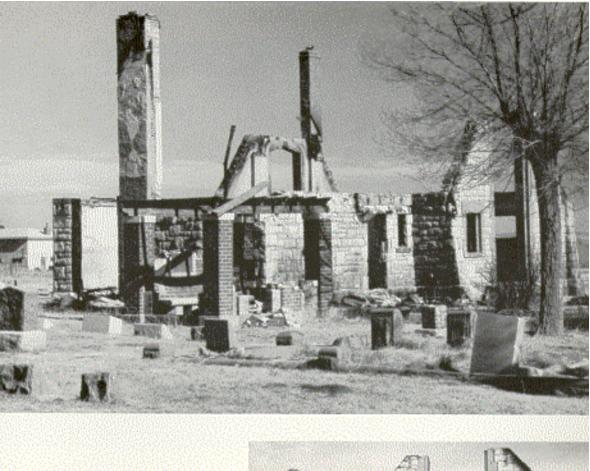


Many of the monuments reflect the artistic grandeur of an earlier day.

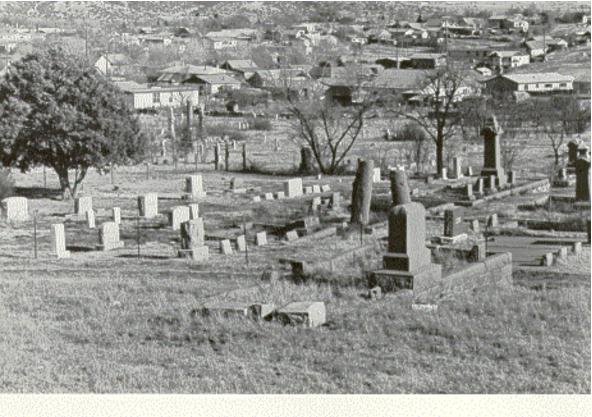




The Charles lifeld Memorial Chapel, which graced the entrance of the cornetery since its construction in 1912, once was regarded as the finest example of Queen Anne architecture in the region. In December of 1988 arsonists set fire to the structure, leaving behind only a shell of its original magnificence.







Closed are the portals of their Synagogue, No Psalms of David now the silence break, No Rabbi reads the ancient Decalogue in the grand dialect the Prophets spake.

Gone are the living, but the dead remain, And not neglected; for a hand unseen, Scattering its bounty, like a summer rain, Still keeps their graves and their resemblance green.

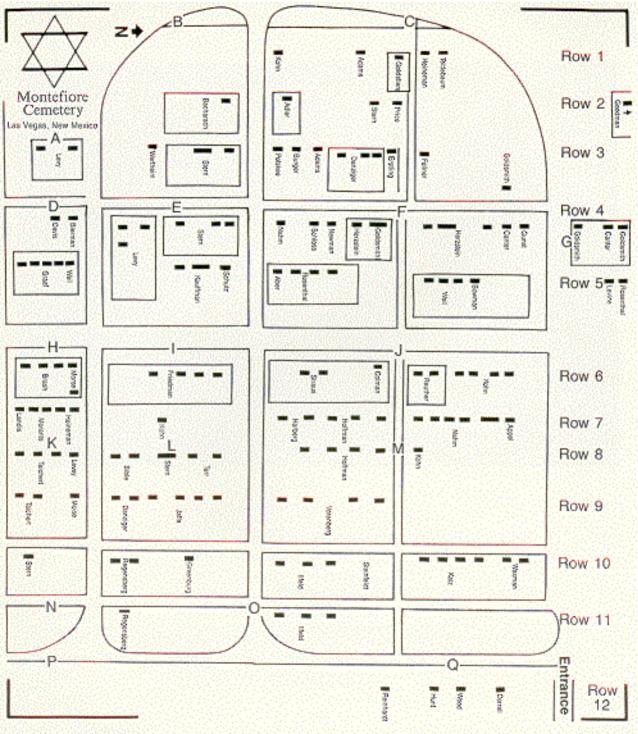
from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, The Jewish Cemetery at Newport, 1852-54.



### IN MEMORIAM

Milton Taichert 1892-1989

Whose vital contributions to the Jewish community of Las Vegas and New Mexico will never be forgotten by the generations who followed.



## Montefiore Cemetery

First on site inventory of monuments made in fall 1988 by Joanie Berde and Lewis Terr. Second on site inventory made spring 1990 by Sherry Lester and Jeffrey Horton.

BOW I Block Commence bloken and a bill of	
ROW 1 Block C: (westmost, highest on the hill.) Lea Kohn 1840-1910	Block F:
H. Adams 1824-1900	Samuel Nahm 1860-1890
David Goldstien 1877-1897	Aaron Schloss 1841-1894
Jacob Heineman 1844-1898	Albert Newman 1874-1900
John H. Teitlebaum 1843-1908 (9)	Levi Hertzstein 1874-1896
(Map indicates a wooden monument south of	Rosa Goldsmith 1848-1937
Goldstien grave site.)	Abe. Goldsmith 1826-1892
ROW 2 Block B:	(Levy) Son of Herzstein 1902-1905
Patsy Bernice Bacharach 1904-1908	Morris Herzstein 1870-1928
	Lena Herzstein 1905-1952
(Large plot may have more graves.) Block C:	Emma Canter 1863-1939
	Betty Gunst 1865-1948 Block G:
Nathan Adler d. 1899 (Map indicates M&C Adler)	
Julius Stern 1890-1891	Fromma Goldsmith 1871-1906
Julius Price 1836-1888	H. A. Canter 1862-1916
	Nathan A. Goldsmith 1869-1907
Block C North:	ROW 5 Block D:
Boyd Travis (Goodman) Jr. 1923-1941	Joseph W. Graaf 1878-1951
ROW 3 Block A:	Jacob Graaf 1875-1941
Jennie Levy 1869-1916	Pauline Graaf 1843-1912
Henry Levy 1860-1909	Julius Granf 1841-1912
Block B:	Alfred Weil 1850-1900
Joseph Wertheim Jr. 1915-1916	Block E:
Julia Stern 1865-1943	Hannah Kauffman 1900-1900
Jacob Stern 1861-1927	Carrie Kauffman 1867-7 Sol Kauffmann 1853-1928
Sydney Stern 1897-1901	
Block C:	Aaron Schutz 1852-1916
Simon Polskee 1870-1899	ROW 5 Block F:
Homer Luis Burger 1891-1891	Fannie Aber 1858-1935
Cecelia Adams 1886k-1889	Saul Rosenthal 1860-1938
Adolf Danziger 1840-1889	Napelius L. Rosenthal 1830-1896
Violet Danziger 1874-1895	Mother Hulda Rosenthal no date
Barctte Danziger 1848-1919	Pauline Weil 1900-1909
George Erstling 1844-1890	Mother Weil 1861-1925
Charles Fellner 1870-1903	Nathan Weil 1867-1946
Harry Goldsmith 1871-1953	Clarence Bowman 1882-1942
ROW 4 Block D:	Block G:
Walter Bierman 1878-1910	(Miscellaneous grave sites; metal markers down.)
(Map indicates grave of I. Davis, south of	Alex Rosenthal 1853-1943
Bierman.)	(Map indicates S. Levine most north, no marker.)
Block E:	ROW 6 Block H:
Jacob Levy 1885-1905	Benjamin Brash 1842-1910
Caroline Levy 1849-1902	Theresa Brash 1853-1925
Harris Levy d. 1905	Ted Brash d. 1940
Clara Stern 1879-1912	Louise Brash d. 1957
Fannie Stern 1853-1925	Joseph Morse 1872-1902
Isidor Stern 1840-1898	Bertha Morse 1873-1943

Block I: Block M: Emma Friedman 1863-1916 Violet Hoffman Wertz 1903-1986 Moses Friedman 1824-1899 Maurice Hoffman 1906-1973 Hyman Friedman 1857-1912 Iulia D. Hoffman 1878-1947 Redel Friedman no date Nestor Hoffman 1871-1945 Block I: Harry E. Kohn 1878-1947 I. N. Straus 1811-1896 ROW 9 Block K: Adolph Straus 1848-1923 Joseph A. Taichert 1882-1955 Joseph Colman 1841-1895 Annie S. Taichert 1896-1978 Carolina Reuther 1840-1903 Sigmund S. Moise 1877-1941 Simon Reuther d. 1922 Block L: Joseph Danziger 1880-1943 Joseph Kohn 1871-1945 Julia J. Danziger 1892-1973 Adolphine S. Kohn 1871-1949 Eleanor I. Jaffa 1894-1970 Bertha Kohn d. 1924 Arthur G. Jaffa 1883-1952 Chas. C. Kohn 1861-1913 Ester Strauss Jaffa 1869-1929 ROW 7 Block H: Nathan laffa 1863-1945 Myron Landis 1883-1952 Block M: Wolf Morants 1888-1892 Simon Vorenberg 1860-1926 Hattie M. Morants 1885-1940 Theresa H. Vorenberg 1863-1952 Clara Heineman 1888-1942 Saul Vorenberg 1898-1932 Elise Heineman d. 1918 Harry Vorenberg 1900-1956 Block I: ROW 10 Block K: Marie Kohn no date Jay Stern 1893-1971 Block I: Block L: Carl Harberg 1861-1924 Doris L. Regensberg 1929-1933 Julia Klein Harberg 1856-1954 Maurice Regensberg 1884-1930 lanete C. Hoffman 1886-1941 Morris Geenberger 1864-1929 Adele D. Hoffman 1915-1922 Block M: Simon Hoffman 1882-1940 Florence M. Ilfeld 1909-1927 loseph M. Nahm 1901-1986 Minnie S. Ilfeld 1878-1940 Helen Nahm Kessell 1894-1941 Ludwig Wm. Ilfeld 1874-1960 Miriam Nahm 1906-1984 Steinfeldt stone, no names, Phillip? Minnie? Ruth Nahm 1896-1963 Bertha Katz 1870-1940 Ella Nahm 1873-1951 ROW 11 Henry Katz 1905-1941 Sigmund Nahm 1863-1932 Morris Katz 1888-1958 Julius Appel 1873-1924 Marguerite W. Karz 1892-1977 ROW 8 Block K: M. P. Waxman Milton Taichert 1892-1989 R. R. Waxman Francis E. Taichert 1902-1978 ROW 11 Block O: Marlene P. Taichert 1931-1932 Carl Regensberg d. 1942 Henry A. Levey 1849-1932 Richard Charles Iffeld 1933-1943 Block L: Carl Wm. llfeld 1902-1975 Joseph Lloyd Bible 1903-1982 Max Ludwig Ilfeld 1900-1984 Sara S. Bible 1908-1969 ROW 12 Block S: Louis Stern 1861-1930 Carl Reinhardt 1879-1911 Hanna Stern 1868-1957 Miss Alice Hunt 1855-1912 Isaac Terr M.D. 1910-1986 Wm. Edward Wood 1879-1912 Pearl Terr 1877-1973 Bedford H. Correll 1888-1913

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